

# Hillandale



Journal of the  
City of London  
Phonograph and  
Gramophone Society

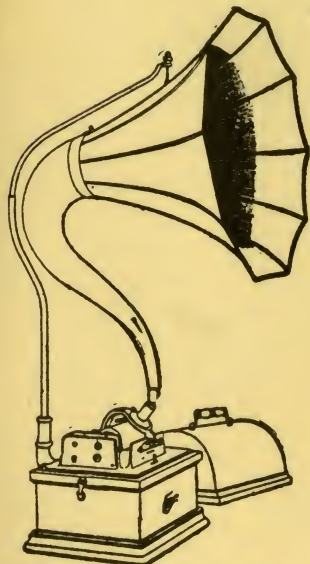
THE HILLANDALE NEWS

April 1987 No. 155

ISSN-0018-1846

THE SOUND WAVE AND TALKING MACHINE RECORD.

169



## THE CYGNET HORN Keeps the Boys at Home.

Mr. Wide, of Tollington Park, informs us that his Cygnet Horn has so improved the reproduction of his Edison that his sons and their friends are so delighted that they have no desire to go out. He considers the Cygnet Horn most wonderful, and the best improvement Mr. Thos. A. Edison has made.

Mr. Adrian F. Sykes, of Lorne Villa, New Barnet, is full of appreciation of the Cygnet Horn. "Sound Waves" will remember reading his enthusiastic letters.

.....

**KEY'S,** FINSBURY PAVEMENT HOUSE,  
LONDON, E.C.  
Showrooms, 44, Finsbury Pavement.

Phone 429 Wall.

Sent on Receipt of 7s. 6d.

Balance 7s. 6d. Monthly.

No extra charges. Money back  
as usual.



"Hey, Albert! This slot-machine  
needs emptying!"

# THE HILLANDALE NEWS

Official Journal of the City of London Phonograph & Gramophone Society  
(founded 1919)

DISTRUBUTION: D.R.Roberts, [REDACTED]

## C O N T E N T S   A P R I L 1987

Editorial	172
More 1905 Miniatures	173
Opera on Bettini, by George Taylor	174
Miniature record labels	181
London Meeting, February and March	185-7
Reviews: John McCormack discography, Restoring the Edison Gem	189,190
Correspondence	191-3
Obituary - Alistair Thomson	194
'Play This One' by Michael Hegarty	194

\*\*\*\*\*

A NEW EDITOR: Would Members please note that in future all contributions for the magazine should be sent to PETER MARTLAND, [REDACTED]

Enquiries relating to the distribution of Hillandale should continue to be referred to D.R. Roberts, NOT to the Editor, please.

## CITY OF LONDON PHONOGRAPH & GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

PRESIDENT:	G.L.Frow, [REDACTED]
VICE-PRESIDENT:	A.D.Besford, D.R.Roberts
CHAIRMAN:	Ted Cunningham, [REDACTED]
VICE-CHAIRMAN, EDITOR:	Peter Martland, [REDACTED]
HON. TREASURER:	D.M.FIELD, [REDACTED]
HON. SECRETARY:	Ken Loughland, [REDACTED]
COMMITTEE:	F.Andrews, L.Watts, C.Proudfoot, T.Stephenson, Suzanne Lewis
ARCHIVIST:	John Carreck, [REDACTED]

## BRANCH SECRETARIES:

East Fife	E.J.Goodall, [REDACTED]
Severn Vale	Lawrie Wilson, [REDACTED]
Chilterns	S.Jellyman, [REDACTED]
Midlands	G.Burton, [REDACTED]
Newcastle	(Clockwork Music Group) P.Bailey, [REDACTED]
Yorkshire	P.Austwick, [REDACTED]
Victoria, Australia	C.Gracie, [REDACTED]



## **EDITORIAL**

For the last few years it has become increasingly difficult for me to find time to produce the Hillandale every other month. Furthermore, although I have never attached great importance to the publication date of a magazine such as this, the powers that be think otherwise and a new Editor has to be found. Plans are afoot for this (in fact, I hoped they were afoot two months ago, and did not expect to have to produce the April issue at all). Quite how the appearance of the magazine will change has yet to be seen, but I think Members may look forward to a fresh approach and something rather different. Who knows, each issue could even appear on time.

Looking back, I see that it was in December 1978 that I first took on the Editorship, and exactly a year later that I started typing the entire text for direct printing. A rough calculation (I am no mathematician) indicates that I must have typed over 800 pages in those seven-and-a-half years, and it seems a shame that I could not complete a ten-year run. However, it will be a welcome release not to have this permanent task awaiting me in the evenings, and it could even be that I may find the time to write an article now and again.

This month's centre-page spread shows a few of the 'small record' labels discussed by Frank Andrews at the December 1986 meeting; the photographs were taken especially for the Hillandale News by Len Watts, to whom our thanks are due. The talk was entitled 'The Under 25's', and covered all records under 10 inches (this, apparently, is 25cm. in Euro-lingo) sold in this country up to the appearance of microgrooves. With the exception of the Berliners, 7-inch G & Ts and their contemporaries, such records were made smaller than the norm for reasons of cheapness. The first such records were thus the 5-inch Zonophones of 1905, if one discounts toys like the Stollwerck and Graphophone, of 1904 and 1899 respectively, and the elusive 5-inch records said to have been made by Crystalate, of which no example is known to exist.

Right on cue, this afternoon I was transported back some fifteen years to my active collecting period when I stopped at a junk shop in North Surrey, the sort that has three-piece suites, divans and sewing machines on the pavement. Inside I found three old jack planes, two of them possibly of 18th-century origin, and had just concluded a deal with the shopkeeper on these when I realised that the small record on top of a pile about a foot away from the planes, which I had seen out of the corner of my eye but not taken in, was a 5-inch Zonophone. That I had not spotted this the moment I entered the shop just shows how out of practice I am. Underneath was a 7-inch G & T, and another, and another..... I came away with two Berliners, the Zonophone, a Climax, a 7-inch Columbia, eight G & Ts and one 10-inch (A Rena of Harry Bluff). Before I had asked about prices, the shopkeeper told me, somewhat defensively, as if he thought I would expostulate at such daylight robbery, that he charged £1 each for records on the basis that anyone who knew about records would pay that for the ones that were worth it, and the remainder could be sold off cheaply when enough collectors had combed the pile. I assured him that I thought this an excellent idea.

Among the many facts to come up in Frank's talk was that the Globe Record Company of New York, who made Climax Records for Columbia, were bought in January 1902 by Eldridge Johnson, much to Columbia's embarrassment. Johnson was prepared to sell Globe to Columbia in exchange for an agreement freeing him from any patent

litigation over his own record production. This happened in February 1902, so that his ownership of Globe was very short. My newly acquired Climax, No. 115, has the letters V.T.M. embossed in a circle on the edge of the label area; could this be Victor Talking Machine? Another curiosity is that all the label information, plus the name of the singer, who is anonymously a 'Tenor Solo' on the label itself, is embossed in capitals on the wax under the label. Looking at my only other Climax (which also cost me £1 - about 1973) I see that this too has the V.T.M. mark, but no other embossing. It also has a brass ring round the centre hole, which 115 does not, and gold rather than silver printing. Do all Climaxes have V.T.M. on them, or is it just coincidence that the only two to have come my way were recorded in that brief period at the beginning of 1902?

C.P.

### MORE 1905 MINIATURES

Mention of the 5-inch Zonophones forms a suitable introduction to the following account, sent in by Frank Andrews as a postscript to his December talk, in which the Ettlinger postcards were mentioned only in passing.

Max Ettlinger & Co., of Long Acre, advertised 'M.Ettlinger "Discal" Postcards' in the trade magazines in March 1905. Max Ettlinger was also reported to have produced a machine, the 'Discophone', at 5/-, made of wood and aluminium. It was patented and had taken two years to develop. A thin, gelatinous adhesive disc received the recording on the machine, and could then be stuck on a postcard and sent through the post. The recordings gave an adequate volume of sound and were absolutely permanent.

Referring to these 'Discal' postcards, the Daily Express stated that the Gramophone Company had for several years past made records for affixing to postcards, but had not put them on the market, regarding them as unsuitable for their class of business.

The Zonophon G.m.b.H. of Berlin had advertised 'Singing, Talking and Musical Postkarten' in the June 4th 1905 edition of the Phonographische Zeitschrift. In the next issue, of June 11th., 'Postkarten Schallplatte' were advertised by the publishers, M.Taubert & Co. of Berlin, at 5Marks for 12 cards.

In April 1905 Max Ettlinger were offering one free Discophone machine for every three gross of postcards ordered. During this month it was also reported that a French syndicate intended to place record-bearing postcards on the market. In May, the Ettlinger postcards were displayed at the Picture Postcard Exhibition at Earls Court. A selection of pre-recorded cards included such titles as the National Anthem, The Washington Post, Valse Bleue, Home, Sweet Home, Auld Lang Syne, Stop your Tickling, Jock and Buying a House. All were declared suitable for playing on any machine which had a clamping screw to stop the card slipping on the turntable. These cards cost 6d. Ettlinger were still dealing in their cards in May 1908. In September 1905, Edwin A. Denham of 31 Berelay(?) St., New York, was advertising as an importer of 'Musical and Talking Postcards', made in London, which had a 3½-inch transparent celluloid disc recording at the centre.



# Opera On Bettini

by George Taylor

The Bettini cylinders have always been of great interest to those concerned with the very early days of recording, particularly of opera and opera singers. Whereas Mapleson did his recording essentially for his own amusement, Bettini, while he started in such a way, went on to make commercial recordings and to issue catalogues. His catalogues list among others the recordings made by some of the great singers of the turn of the century, and there is also evidence that even more stellar singers recorded for him privately. The possibility of these recordings' turning up in various parts of the world acts as a constant stimulus to the interest of the collector. The purpose of this article is to indicate which singers were supposed to have recorded for Bettini, and to describe the cylinders by opera singers which have turned up so far.

Descriptions of Bettini's activities can be found in Gelatt (ref.1) and Read and Welch (ref 2), but the key article is still Moran's (ref 3), which collected all the information concerning Bettini's recording activities, and described all the cylinders known to exist at the time. Since then, more details and cylinders have been unearthed, and these are described by Betz (ref 4) and Collins (ref 5). Moran lists sixty-six (or sixty-seven) cylinders (Two entries may refer to the same cylinder), and Collins a further six (he says five repeatedly in his article, but describes six not listed by Moran). So this makes a total of seventy-two (or seventy-three) cylinders, quite a lot really. However, there are one or two duplicate selections, and also the same selection sung by different singers; Bettini is known to have substituted new singers for old as time went on.

Bettini was born in 1860 of prosperous parents, married a wealthy American heiress and moved in elevated circles in New York, meeting many of the celebrated opera singers of the day. He started recording in about 1890, using his own spider shaped stylus carrier to give reproduction which was an improvement on reproducers then available. From the mid-nineties, when pantographic cylinder reproduction became available, Bettini sold recordings and also equipment. He opened a recording studio in Paris, and also issued some disc recordings, but by 1908, he was overtaken by the general growth of commercial recording and left the phonograph trade. He had a large collection of cylinders, probably including recordings of the great singers of the nineties such as Jean de Reszke and others; but most, if not all, were destroyed during the 1914-18 war. Bettini himself lived on until 1908.

## SINGERS RECORDING FOR BETTINI

Happily, a few catalogues survive, and these, together with other references collected by Moran, allow one to draw up a list of the singers recorded by Bettini. Many of the singers are listed by Girard and Barnes (ref 6), along with their cylinders, presumably from the catalogues. The singers, together with the number of cylinders they recorded (if known) are shown in the first table. If there is no figure entered in a cylinder column, the number of cylinders is unknown; and certainly, the cylinders made by some singers, particularly the celebrities, were never catalogued. Probably many of the entries are incomplete.

SingerCatalogued (or known) recordings

	Solo	Concerted
Abbott, Bessie (1878-1919) soprano		3
Abbott, Jessie (?) soprano (note 1)		3
Adams, Suzanne (1872-1953) soprano	5	
Ancona, Mario (1860-1931) baritone	9	
Arnoldson, Sigrid (1861-1943) soprano	1	
Arral, Blanche (1864-1945) soprano	48	
Aumonier, Paul (1874-1944) bass		
Belina, Mme (?) mezzo		
Beltrami, Ottorino (?) baritone		
Berini Humphreys, Mme. (?) soprano		
Calvé, Emma (1858-1942) soprano		1
Campanari, Guiseppe (1855-1927)	14	4
Campodonico, Armanda (?) mezzo		
Ceppi, Antonio (1870-1901) tenor	3	
Chalia, Rosalia (1864-1948) soprano	75	41
Ciaparelli, Gina (1881-1936) soprano	22	note 2
Corin, M. (?) baritone		
Corin-Levasseur, Mme. (?) soprano		
Dani, Carlo (?) tenor	1 (note 3)	
de Bassani, Alberto (1847-?) baritone	68	32
de Brélor, Louise (?) soprano	16	
de Gogorza, Emilio (1872-1949) baritone	12	
del Papa, Dante (1854-1923) tenor	76	35
de Reszké, Edouard (1854-1917) bass		
de Reszké, Jean (1850-1925) tenor		
Desvignes, Carlotta (?) contralto	3	
de Vere-Sapio, Clementine (1864-1954) soprano	4	
Engle, Marie (1860-?) soprano	1 (note 4)	
Franceschetti, Aristide (?) baritone	12	
Francesconi, Sig. (?) baritone		4
Frankel, Jonka (?) contralto		2
Giannini, Ferruccio (1868-1948) (note 5)		1
Gilibert, Charles (1866-1910) baritone		
Girardi, Vittorio (?) bass	32	8
Giusti, M. (?) ?		
Huston, Miss (?) mezzo		1
Jerome, Irene (?) soprano		
Lassalle, Jean (1845-1909) tenor		
Mantelli, Eugenia (1860-1926) mezzo	4	
Maurel, Victor (1848-1923) baritone		
Moisson, Gaston (?) tenor		
Melba, Nellie (1861-1931) soprano		

Nicolini, Ernesto (1834-1898) tenor		
Nordica, Lillian (1857-1914) soprano		
Piccaluga, Albert (1854-1925) baritone (note 6)		
Plancon, Pol (1855-1914) bass	4	
Roselle, F. (?) mezzo		1
Salèza, Albert (1867-1916) tenor	6	
Salignac, Thomas (1867-1945) tenor	2	
Saville, Frances (1862-1935) soprano	4	2 (note 7)
Scotti, Antonio (1866-1936) baritone	3	
Sembrich, Marcella (1858-1935) soprano	1	(note 8)
Strakosch, Mme. (?) soprano (note 9)	12	
Sylva, Gertrude (?) soprano	19	
Tamagno, Francesco (1850-1905) tenor		
Torriani, Ottavia (?) soprano	12	
Ughetti, Sig. (?) baritone	1	
van Dyck, Ernest (1861-1923) tenor	5	
Vanni, Roberto (1861-1941) tenor	4	
van Rooy, Anton (1870-1932) bass baritone	3	
Zerni, Edgardo (?) tenor	4	

#### NOTES

- 1 Bessie and Jessie were sisters. Later in her career, there was a misprint in the spelling of Bessie's name - she liked it.
- 2 Girard & Barnes list no concerted items. It is known that Ciaparelli substituted for Chalia in certain repeats, and indeed, several such recordings survive.
- 3 It is not certain that this is a Bettini, although it has all the hallmarks.
- 4 This selection was also recorded by Arral and de Brelor; it is not certain which artist recorded the surviving cylinders.
- 5 This tenor was the father of the soprano Dusolina Giannini.
- 6 Collins (ref 5) suspects that Moran's 32 (a French song) may be sung by Piccaluga. See below.
- 7 One of Salignac's cylinders was recorded with the great Emma Calvé.
- 8 Sembrich's cylinder, Voci di Primavera (Strauss) was not in any catalogue seen, or in Girard & Barnes.
- 9 Moran (ref 3) speculates that the singer is Poebe Strakosch, 'who was a member of the Henry W. Savage Opera Co; thought to have been a niece of Clara Louise Kellogg Strakosch'. The latter was a celebrated American singer (1842-1916); did she record for Bettini?

It is seen from the table that a large number of singers seem to have recorded for Bettini, ranging from the most celebrated to the (now) unknown. Several celebrities recorded cylinders for sale, notably Adams, Ancona, Calvé, Maurel, Plancon, Saleza



Salignac, van Dyck and van Rooy. Bettini produced standard-sized cylinders and also, in certain cases, concert-sized cylinders, presumably giving better sound quality. Sembrich's cylinder is of the concert variety, and several artists now all but unknown also recorded on the large cylinders, so were presumably esteemed in their time.

One striking point shown in the table is that a large number of singers accounted for a large proportion of the recordings; Arral (48), Chalia (126), Ciaparelli (22, plus a number of repeats of Chalia's earlier productions, especially, perhaps concerted items), de Bassini (100), del Papa (111), Girardi (19) and Sylva (19). Several other singers contributed quite a few: Campanari (18), de Brelor (16), de Gogorza (12), Franceschetti (12), Strakosch (12) and Torriani (12). The most prolific of the celebrated singers appears to be Ancona (9). As Collins (ref 5) suggests, it seems reasonable to assume that when Bettini's commercial dealings were well under way, he required a number of singers to provide cylinders regularly; obviously he was not going to tempt the great names into the studio on a routine basis, so he engaged Chalia, Ciaparelli, de Bassini and del Papa in particular, with Girardi providing bass support as required. Of these singers, perhaps Rosalia Chalia had the most distinguished career, with Ciaparelli and de Bassini close on her heels; I have summarised their careers elsewhere (ref 7). Bettini always claimed that del Papa was a Metropolitan Opera singer, but Collins (ref 5) finds no indication of his having sung there, and suggests he was a chorister.

#### SURVIVING CYLINDERS

From the list of surviving cylinders compiled by Moran and Collins, the following list of operatic singers and the number of surviving titles is gathered - in one or two cases, more than one copy survives. Not all the recordings are of opera.

<u>Singer</u>	<u>Solos</u>		<u>Concerted</u>	
	Listed	Surviving	Listed	Surviving
Campanari	14	2	4	
Chalia	75	3	41	6 (note 1)
Ciaparelli	22	1 (note 2)	(at least 10)	10
Dani	1	1		
de Bassini	68	3	32	13
de Gogorza	12	3		
del Papa	76	2	35	8
'Engle'	1	1		
Francesconi			4	1
Girardi	32	1	8	4
Saléza	6	1		
Salignac	2	1	2	
Saville	4	1		
Sembrich	(at least 1)	1		
Strakosch	12	2		
Vanni	4	1		
Totals		24		20 (or 21, note 3)

#### Notes

- 1 One of these might be by Ciaparelli, or there might be two cylinders, one by each singer.
- 2 This cylinder might be by Chalia
- 3 Not counting titles twice (except see not 1).

The concerted cylinders involve combinations of the singers in the table, particularly Chalia, Ciaparelli, de Bassini and del Papa.

The table shows that forty-four (or 45) cylinders by opera singers have been found so far. This is well over half of the total surviving Bettini cylinders. The table shows that nearly as many concerted recordings survive as solo pieces, notwithstanding the fact that there were apparently about seven times as many solo items recorded as concerted selections. Perhaps this selective survival of concerted recordings reflects poorer sales (and hence more old stock), or perhaps less playing and handling and thus less chance of breakage?

Furthermore, all the concerted items except one (a duet by Francesconi and Giraudi) were recorded by the stock singers Chalia et al. This presumably reflects the mass-production of cylinders by these singers.

Coming to the solo items, the stock singers account for only ten of the twenty-four (or thirteen if we include Campanari and Giraudi). None of the other singers, apart from Sembrich, is outstanding, although de Gogorza recorded well and had a prolific recording career. Saleza and Salignac were more competent tenors, however, and would be better known today had they not been outshone by their contemporary, Jean de Reszke. Their Bettini cylinders are particularly important as they otherwise did not record commercially, though they do appear in the Mapleson collection. Though Frances Saville recorded for G & T about 1902, the survival of a cylinder by this Marchesi-trained singer is also to be valued. These cylinders will be considered further below.

#### RE-ISSUES OF BETTINI CYLINDER RECORDINGS

##### 1. Marcella Sembrich, 'Voci di Primavera' (Strauss)

The Sembrich cylinder is of the concert size and was discovered in New Zealand. It was issued in 1965 by EMI of New Zealand as an EP single, and appears also on Volume I of the l.p. set of Sembrich recordings issued by Sunday Opera Records as MSC-1, and probably elsewhere.

This recording can be compared with Sembrich's Columbia 1365 disc of 1903 and Victor 85036 of 1904; both of these are dubbed on MSC-1 and in addition, I could listen to an original of the Victor recording, issued by G & T, VM-53055, which, of course gives a more immediate sound quality than the l.p.

First it must be noted that the Bettini performance is much truncated. It was probably a non-commercial recording (which is why it does not appear in any catalogue perhaps) as, apart from being announced, the announcer applauds and shouts 'bravo' at the end. The Columbia and Victor recordings give the song more or less complete. There is undoubtedly a bravura informality about the Bettini recording which is to a degree absent in the more studied (and polished) commercial recordings, and also

Sembrich's high notes seem to be more free on the early cylinder. But in recording quality, the commercial discs, even the Columbia, are hi-fi compared to the cylinder. Apart from the characteristic verve rumble on the (distant) piano, there is a constant effect as of gargling throughout the performance. Possibly this is a fault of the l.p. or wear on the cylinder; however, the other (disc) transfers seem to be very good. Sembrich has a 'steam whistle' or car 'hooting' reputation from her disc recordings, which is somewhat in evidence here, but as far as one can gather, this tendency could be less on the cylinder. Perhaps passage of time is the reason - when was the cylinder made, 1898 perhaps? Sembrich would then be forty, in 1904 she would be forty-six, and possibly some of the ease of emission was beginning to fade. Nevertheless, all three performances are glorious to listen to.

2. Bettini cylinders on the American l.p. UORC 323

This record is reviewed by Collins (ref. 5). The Bettini cylinders dubbed are as follows:

1. Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti): Tu che a Dio, Albert Saléza (tenor)
2. Rigoletto (Verdi): Caro nome, Frances Saville (soprano)
3. Carmen (Bizet): Toreador song, Guiseppe Campanari (baritone)
4. Mignon (Thomas): Ah non credevi tu, Dante del Papa (tenor)
5. Semiramide (Rossini): Bel ragazzo, Rosalia Chalia (soprano)
6. Pagliacci (Leoncavallo): So ben che diforme, Gina Ciaparelli (soprano) and Alberto de Bassini (baritone)
7. Otello (Verdi): Esultate, and Ora e per sempre, Roberto Vanni (tenor)
8. Guillaume Tell (Rossini): Troncar suoi di, announced, no artist's name

I have not heard the record and Collins' comments are summarised here. The first six items are not in Moran's 1865 list. Saleza is dimly heard on the Mapleson cylinders, and unfortunately the Bettini is no better. The cylinder seems to be worn or damaged. Frances Saville was trained by Marchesi in Paris, and made her debut as late as 1892 in Brussels. She sang in the chorus at the Met from 1895 to 1899, and made guest appearances in opera houses in Europe. After 1903, she was with the Vienna opera (she made G & Ts in Vienna). Later she lived in California and was an aunt of Frances Alda. Her cylinder sounds better than the Saleza, and the voice is recognisably the same as on the G & Ts. The Campanari cylinder sounds still better, and though the singer recorded the aria several times for both Columbia and Victor, here he sounds more assertive and less uninvolved. The del Papa cylinder is perhaps the best of his surviving work, and an interesting variation at the aria's conclusion suggests a long lost performance practice. Chalia's cylinder is also of her best. She treats the aria with respect and demonstrates agility and ease of projection. Unfortunately, the cylinder seems to have been played with a bad reproducer at some time. Cylinder 6 was obviously damaged. Vanni's cylinder is the best sound of any operatic Bettini. The singer seems to copy Tamagno's tempi and declamatory style (he would have heard Otello's creator at the Met in 1894). Not a bad performance. Vanni shows less strain than some contemporary singers in the role. He was not a major artist and sang comprimario roles at the Met from 1894 to 1907. Cylinder 8 is thought to



be by de Bassini, del Papa and Girardi, after comparison with other cylinders by those singers. The tempo is slow, straining del Papa badly, de Bassini is adequate, but Girardi has trouble with his low notes.

3. World's Rarest Recordings, American l.p. Mark 56 826

This record is (or was) available through the CLPGS and was reviewed by Frow (ref 8) and Collins (ref 5). I can also comment as I own a copy. Most of the items are operatic and all the operatics are by Chalia, Ciaparelli, del Papa and de Bassini. All are listed by Moran.

1. Otello: Credo, Alberto de Bassini
2. Aida: Revedrai le foreste, Ciaparelli and de Bassini
3. Martha (Flotow): Il suo sguardo e dolce incanto, Ciaparelli and del Papa
4. Guillaume Tell: see item 8 on the UORC record
5. Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti): Guai se ti sfugge un mota, Chalia, del Papa and de Bassini (mislabelled on l.p)
6. Aida: Morir si pura e bella, Ciaparelli and del Papa
7. Ruy Blas (Marchetti): Act 4 duet, Ciaparelli and de Bassini
8. Pagliacci: Un nido di memorie, de Bassini
9. Aida: Nel fiero anelito, Ciaparelli and del Papa
10. Un Ballo in Maschera (Verdi): Non sai tu, Ciaparelli and del Papa
11. Pagliacci: Stridono lassi, Chalia
12. Faust (Gounod): Act 5 trio, Chalia, del Papa, and de Bassini
13. La Forza del Destino (Verdi): Ah per sempre, Ciaparelli and del Papa

I can summarise my comments: Chalia sounds an accomplished singer, Ciaparelli (only 19 at the time) sounds occasionally promising, de Bassini is occasionally interesting, and del Papa is pathetic. Frow feels that the sound quality is not bad for records of this age, and thinks they sound better than the Maplesons he has heard. Collins has more detailed comments on each item. He rightly says that de Bassini is potentially an interesting singer, though actually often disappointing. As he was born in 1847, he might shed some light on performance practice prior to verismo and Wagner in Italy. His mother and father were good singers. Evidence of a vanished style can be found on some of his slightly later Columbias, but Collins suggests that as he was one of Bettini's 'staff singers', cranking out the cylinders, he was not then as careful. Collins praises the singer's evenness of emission in the Credo from 'Otello', and indeed, there is some distinction in the performance. In the 'Aida' duet with Ciaparelli, his singing is of a higher standard than that of the soprano, who is rather out of her depth. Ciaparelli is better in the 'Martha' duet, and Collins considers this to be one of del

## MIMOSA

Mimosas were among the first of the small records of the 1920s, appearing in October 1921. They were put out by the Sound Recording Co. Ltd., and manufactured by Crystalate. The earliest issues were single-sided and 'un-breakable' on a compressed core, but this gave way to solid stock almost immediately. Diameter

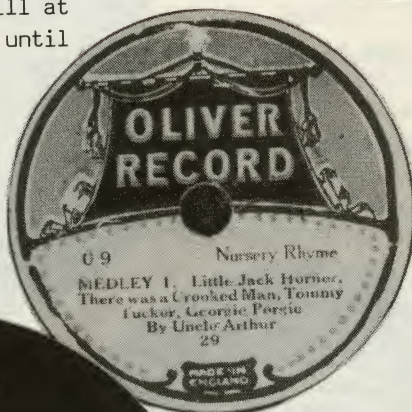


was 5½ inches, increasing later to 6 and ultimately to 7 inches. Mimosas were sold through Woolworth's at 6d. The first issues had M-prefixed catalogue numbers, but this soon changed to 'P', perhaps when the Sound Recording Company issued its 'Little Pop Record' (double-sided) in December 1921. Mimosas also became double-sided quite soon.



The same masters were used for pressing numerous other brands: Kiddyphone, Pigmy, Oliver, Marspen (Marks & Spencer), Beacon, The Butterfly and Savana, for example; eventually, Crystal-ate took over the Sound Recording Company's labels.

In 1928, the Mimosa (by then electrically recorded) was replaced by the Victory, still at 7 inches. These lasted until 1931.



## LITTLE MARVEL

The Little Marvel started at 5 3/8 inches, and appeared, like Mimosa, in late 1921. It came from the Aeolian/Universal Music Co., and was also supplied to Woolworth's; hence the letter 'W' prominently displayed on the label. Little Marvels seem always to have





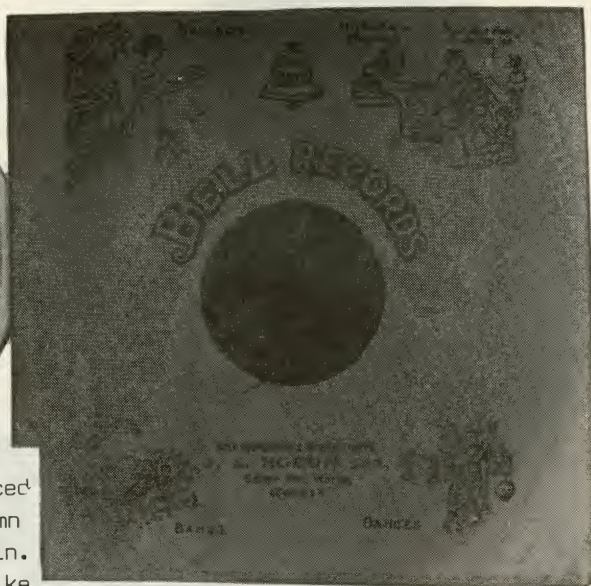
been double-sided, and at first were sold by matrix numbers. Later, when the size had increased to 6 inches, there was a 1,000 catalogue series. There was also a special category of Nursery Records.

Aeolian's small matrices were also used for such labels as Vocalion Record (for Selfridges), Boots the Chemists, The Beltona Bairns Book (for John G. Murdoch & Co.) and The Fairy, for export.



In 1925, the Little Marvel passed to the newly-formed Vocalion Gramophone company. In the following year, Vocalion acquired the Marconi electrical recording process, which was used on the later Little Marvels, as indicated by an encircled 'M' on the label.

# J.E.HOUGH LTD.



J.E.Hough Ltd. also introduced their small records in the Autumn of 1921; these were 5 3/8-in. discs, labelled The Bell. Like Sound Recording/Crystalate and Vocalion, Hough's Edison Bell Works produced other records from their matrices: Marspen, Savana, Boots, Little Briton, John Bull, Dinky and Fairy. The Bell ran until September 1926 (by which time it was electrically recorded and six inches in size), after which it was replaced the the 6-inch Crown. A special blue-labelled series of the Crown was used with the Edison Bell Picturegram machines. In December 1926, a special record was issued of community singing in the Lewisham Playhouse Theatre; this was labelled 'Edison Bell'.





Papa's better efforts - perhaps it is. The 'William Tell' excerpt is described on the record as sung by Ciaparelli et al, notwithstanding that no female voice is to be heard! As Collins remarks, the tempo is slow, straining del Papa badly. De Bassini is adequate, but Girardi, if it is Girardi, has trouble with his low notes (see also the UORC record).

And so one can go on through the remaining selections on the l.p. Basically, the trouble with at least this l.p. of Bettini cylinders is, to me, the poor sound quality. The sound on even contemporary disc recordings (several Berliners I have heard) is, to my ears, much better.

I conclude with one selection on the Mark 56 l.p., Moran's item 32, a song from 'La Mascotte', an operetta by Audran, very popular in the latter part of the century. The singer is anonymous, but the piece is elegantly sung. Collins presents evidence suggesting that the singer is in fact Albert Piccaluga, who was an Audran expert. Piccaluga recorded anonymously and also under his own name on Pathe cylinders and discs and Columbia cylinders issued between 1899 and 1902.

#### References:

1. Gelatt, R: The Fabulous Phonograph, 2nd ed., Collins 1977
2. Read, O. and Welch, W.L: From Tin Foil to Stereo, Sams, 1959
3. Moran, W.R: The Record Collector, 16 (1965), 148-185
4. Betz, P: Hillandale 40 (1967) 178-180
5. Collins, W.J: The Record Collector, 28 (1984) 228-236
6. Girard, V. and Barnes, H.M: Vertical-cut Cylinders and Discs, BIRS 1971
7. Taylor, G.W: Hillandale 126 (1982) 54-55
8. Frow, G: Hillandale 119 (1981) 199

G.W.Taylor, 21 January 1987  
Laus Deo

## London Meeting

17th February 1987

### "INTO THIN AIR"

Merle Gardner came up from Somerset to present an unusual and stimulating programme of recordings taken from radio broadcasts of the 1930s and 1940s. In those days radio programmes were not pre-recorded for transmission; everything went out 'live', and it is galling to consider the wealth of priceless material by fabulous artists which was lost to posterity, broadcast to last for that fleeting moment, and waste sweetness on the desert air. However, those recordings which did preserve the fleeting moment were rarely intended as historical documents. (One of the rare exceptions came early in Mr. Gardner's discourse, when he played the earliest extant recording of a radio programme: coverage of the Harding-Coolidge Presidential Election by station KDKA Pittsburgh, on 9th November 1920). No; for the main part these transcriptions were made and kept either so that the Radio Station, the sponsors, et al. could keep



track of what had actually been broadcast or, later, so that American forces serving in foreign theatres of war could be entertained by the shows they left behind them. The recordings were made on every kind of medium: shellac, etched aluminium, acetate on glass, wire, tape etc. Sound quality varied enormously, depending both on the recording medium and the state of preservation.

Most of Mr. Gardner's examples were taken from American radio, for the good reason that during the 1930s and 1940s the multitudinous American stations made wider use of transcriptions than did our own BBC: moreover they were less inclined to lock them away in inaccessible places. (Perhaps there is another good reason: despite having been lecturer in English at Bridgwater College, Somerset, for the past twenty-odd years, Mr. Gardner hails from Maine in New England, and was once a radio journalist.) At first he played us examples of the light entertainment shows which I remember from the late years of the war, when American forces were in Britain; slickly scripted and fixed firmly around a celebrity entertainer: Jack Benny, Al Jolson or Bing Crosby. There must have been some compulsion to invite operatic guests on to these shows. We heard Frank Sinatra and Lawrence Tibbett perform an unlikely duet in April 1945. There was an extract from a wartime 'Mail Call' programme in which Bing Crosby and Richard Crooks played out a comedy sketch together, finishing with a duet. Mr. Gardner amused us when he followed this with a transcription from a 'Philco Radio Time' programme which came two years later, in 1946, in which we heard Bing Crosby and Ezio Pinza perform the identical sketch, word for predictable word, and round it off with the identical duet. Crosby was later to be the first performer to enjoy the facility of pre-recorded shows: we heard an excerpt from a 1947 programme (with Lauritz Melchior this time, but a different sketch, thank goodness) which was clearly edited.

This was all good fun, but more rewarding still, for me anyway, was when Mr. Gardner turned to the transcriptions of purely operatic radio broadcasts. Here were some unexpected treasures. Sometimes these recordings captured an artist singing on radio an item never recorded commercially. We heard extracts from 'The Voice of Firestone', and a 'Bell Telephone Hour' of 1947 which included Ezio Pinza singing 'Ombra mai fu'. Better still we heard excerpts from the famous live radio relays of complete New York Metropolitan Opera matinee performances, starring such artists as Gigli and Grace Moore. We were somewhat dismayed to discover that these included the steady voice-over of music critic Deems Taylor, giving a blow-by-blow commentary on the stage action while the music was actually in progress. We were told that this practice was later discontinued in the face of protests from the listeners, and I can well believe it. We heard an extract (without commentary) from a 'Traviata' of 12th December 1935 starring Rosa Ponselle and Lawrence Tibbett.

In the long intervals of these live performances the Radio Station took the microphone backstage to relay live interviews with the artists. We heard examples from Elisabeth Rethberg, from Rosa Ponselle (describing the action of 'La Forza del Destino') and from Tito Schipa (recalling the personalities of Puccini and Toscanini). Schipa also featured, if that is the word, in a sponsored 30-minute version of 'Don Giovanni' broadcast from St. Louis, in which the whole of 'Il mio tesoro' was obliterated by an uncomprehending announcer explaining it was now time to leave the opera house and return to the studio.

This entertaining evening finished on a dramatic note when Mr. Gardner played a recording of the moment when Giovanni Martinelli singing Radames on 26th February 1938, became more and more distressed during 'Celeste Aida' and ultimately collapsed

on stage. Another tenor, Frederic Jagel, was listening to the broadcast. He jumped into a taxi, went straight to the opera-house, and finished the performance. Only fifteen minutes were lost.

A.O.Leon-Hall

17th March 1987

We were pleased to welcome back to Bloomsbury our member from East Fife, Chris Hamilton, who gave us a further instalment of 'The Scottish Connection', the story of the gramophone, its personalities and records in Scotland. Having set the scene for us with Scottish record and machine companies a year ago, Chris treated us this time to a variety of recordings by Scottish performers of widely differing types. We heard Aberdeen-born soprano Mary Garden, who created the heroine's part in Debussy's 'Pelleas et Melissande' in 1902, although on this occasion in the more homely music of 'Comin' thro' the Rye' and 'The Blue Bell of Scotland'; Joseph Hislop in Burns and Grieg; and an unfamiliar (at least to this reviewer) and electrifying performance by the Glasgow-born pianist Frederic Lamond of the Tarantelle from the second book of pieces 'Annees de pelerinage' by his teacher, Liszt. Then came a late acoustic recording of psalms rendered by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir under the direction, naturally, of Sir Hugh Robertson.

Two of the 'Songs of the Hebrides' - 'Kishmul's Galley' and 'An Eriskay Love Lilt', well sung in Gaelic by Kenneth Macrae, were followed by 'Mother's Pie Crust' performed by the eccentric comedienne Nellie Wallace. Fay Compton sang Walter Donaldson classic 'My Blue Heaven', this time on a rather scratchy Edison Bell Electron, which was followed by that most polished performer Jack Buchanan, in duet with his stage partner Binnie Hale, in an unbeatable rendering of 'Who' from the Kern-Hammerstein show 'Sunny', which was staged at the London Hippodrome in 1926. Next we heard David McCallum, leader in turn of four symphony orchestras, in some Scottish dance tunes, humour from Tommy Lorne, and also from the 'Laird of Inversnecky', in other words Harry Gordon. Somewhere in between all this we heard some homespun jollity accompanied by a fiddler on a Stroh, an instrument which features but rarely in electrical recordings.

All good things come to an end, and after some Scottish psalm tunes played by A.M.Henderson on the organ of Glasgow University Memorial Chapel in 1929, the meeting ended with some typical drollery by William McCulloch.

Thank you, Chris, and haste ye back.

Plum Label



Ogden Smiths, Talking Machinists,  
CLAPHAM JUNCTION, CROYDON & TWICKENHAM.

THE  
"DULCETTA"

DISC MACHINE

£3 - 3 - 0

Carriage paid, on approval.



This Magnificent Machine (guaranteed throughout) gives the finest, clearest, and sweetest reproduction ever heard from a Talking Machine; It is not a "blatant blarer," suitable for a country fair, but a musical instrument suitable for the Home Circle. It will cost you nothing to test our statement, for we will forward one, carriage paid, and refund the money if you do not care to keep it.

**SPECIFICATION.**

**Cabinet.**

Polished Carved Oak, 14 x 14 x 7 inches.

**Motor.**

Spring very powerful Gear wheels, properly cut and adjusted, giving silent running of two to three records at one winding.

**Sound Box.**

Made on the improved "Reciprocated" principle.

**Flower Horn.**

Decorated in shaded colors, 22 x 20 inches.

PRICE:-

£3 - 3 - 0

**RECORD BREAKING  
EXTRAORDINARY.**

**3d.** Threepence allowed on the return of each worn-out or broken  
**CYLINDER RECORD**  
upon the purchase of one 9d. or 1/- New Record.

One Shilling allowed on the return of each worn-out or broken  
**DISC RECORD**  
upon the purchase of two New 10-inch Records.

**1/-**

Now is your opportunity for exchanging that little pile, that you never play, for a new and up-to-date selection. Send for our Price List.

**OGDEN SMITHS, TALKING MACHINISTS.**

Clapham Junction (Chief Office), Croydon and Twickenham.



# Reviews

## JOHN McCORMACK: A COMPREHENSIVE DISCOGRAPHY

Compiled by Paul W. Worth and Jim Cartwright  
(Greenwood Press)

Discographies, to the serious record enthusiast, are among the most interesting and satisfying of books, and here we have a discography devoted to the art of a man who can be considered the first singer of world fame to come from Ireland, and who was a major figure in the history of the gramophone.

John McCormack, born in Athlone in 1884, made his first recording when he was 20, before he went to Italy to study voice with Vincenzo Sabatini. From the time of that first encounter with the phonograph horn in 1904 he continued to sing regularly for the talking machine until 1943, achieving a recording career of thirty-eight years, almost to the day, and during this time he never let so much as a year pass between visits to a recording studio. Throughout this long and celebrated career (he died in 1945) he made hundreds of recordings, many of which are still available in modern form. It is stated, and believably, that more of his performances were available on microgroove records forty years after his death than could be had in earlier formats at any time when he was alive, and this is almost certainly still the case. His output was prodigious: the compilers of this new discography write that they have been able to document 1,197 commercial recordings by McCormack, of which 733 exist as published records, microgroove transfers, or test pressings of unpublished recordings. There are also thirty-nine broadcast transcriptions known to exist, and there may be other recordings that the compilers, for all their diligent research, may have missed.

Here, then, is a splendidly detailed listing of the great tenor's recordings, although it is not the first McCormack discography to be published, and the compilers duly acknowledge the work of earlier workers in the field. The main body of the book, some 185 pages, is a chronological list of McCormack's recordings, starting with the Edison cylinders made in London in September 1904 for the National Phonograph Company. His next recording session was a week later at 21 City Road, London, although the two recordings of "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms" made on that occasion were not published. McCormack was back in the City Road recording room four days later, and on the following day, to make the first of many discs destined for the G & T catalogue, or pseudonymously as 'John O'Reilly' for issue on the Zonophone label, and so began his long association with the Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd. and its successors HMV and EMI in England, and with the Victor companies in the United States. McCormack recorded for these companies, on their respective sides of the Atlantic, for the remainder of his career, except for the short but fruitful period (1906-9) he spent with the International Talking Machine Company (Odeon) and his early cylinder sessions in London with James Hough and Russell Hunting.

Each entry in the discography is as detailed as it reasonably can be, with recording dates, catalogue numbers and turntable speeds, presenting a mass of information which will be of immense value to collectors and students of the singer's recordings. Equally worthy of high compliment are the long and carefully written sections of the book which precede the chronological list; these are entitled "The Art of John McCormack

and the Phonograph" and "Documenting the Extant Recordings", and are a rich source of information on the singer and his recording career. It must be pointed out that the pages of the book are reproduced from well-arranged and clear typewritten originals. This is quite normal in the production of a book of this nature.

There is one illustration: a 1912 portrait photograph of the singer for a frontispiece. No other pictures are necessary. One can readily imagine the untidy young man at his first recording session singing into a cylinder phonograph in some City of London room, possibly now demolished, or call up a mental image of him at 21 City Road, standing before a cross-gartered conical horn protruding from a mysterious cubicle while a somewhat older, and smaller, man (could it be Fred Gaisberg?) sits ready to accompany him at an elevated piano. Turn the plain pages, daydream on, and the memory's eye will picture the mature singer, now overcoated and hatted, and honoured by Pope and people, beside a limousine - but we have all seen that one.

This reviewer found very few typographical errors among the words, although he was sorry to see that in each reference to Ralph Vaughan Williams, the composer's second name appears as 'Vaughn', but this fault will probably be obvious only to British readers: the man from Down Ampney is still best known in his own country.

To sum up, this is a valuable and desirable book for collectors and students of vocal records, and especially for the many admirers of John McCormack, and its usefulness as a permanent work of reference should earn it a place in music libraries. Bound in dark green cloth, it is priced at £45.00. This is equivalent to 16 pence a page, which is a lot to pay, even for such a fine reference work as this, and the price may be found prohibitively high by quite a number of private enthusiasts.

"John McCormack: A Comprehensive Discography" is published by the Greenwood Press at [REDACTED]

Ken Loughland.

#### RESTORING THE EDISON GEM PHONOGRAPH

by Mike Field

(CLPGS, £4.80)

When, as a schoolboy, I started collecting gramophones, I had little difficulty in learning how to repair them (which is not the same as being able to), because I had long owned a set of 'The Home Mechanic', a part-series issued about 1930. This included several articles on gramophone repairs and improvements, and over the years various other works on the practical side of gramophones and phonographs came my way, and it is salutary to be asked by newcomers to the subject how to carry out basic repairs. The fact is that there has been very little literature available on repairs apart from articles in journals such as this (and I very much regret that few new members can bring themselves to fork out for all available back numbers). I included some notes on the subject in a book once, but that is out of print.

Recently, Eric Reiss's excellent "The Compleat Talking Machine" (reviewed in the



February Hillandale) has gone a long way towards filling this gap, and now "Restoring the Edison Gem Phonograph" goes a stage further. It also adds to the Society's booklist a publication of which one might say, Why on earth did we not do this before?

This book is not aimed at (although it might be of help to) the chap with some worn out pliers and screwdrivers in the garden shed. Rather, it assumes that the reader may wish to restore a battered wreck to as-new condition. That is not to say that it will be of interest only to the owner of such a machine, since it covers every aspect of repair and adjustment.

The reader is led, step-by-step, from the preliminary examination of the machine, with checks on its running if it runs at all, before dismantling, to final adjustment, taking in repainting of the body as well as rebuilding the reproducer. Everything is explained in detail - the hinge-block screw, for example, we learn has a Waltham watch thread, taps for which are virtually unobtainable. Other threads are slightly less obscure, although the correct taps are also difficult to find on this side of the Atlantic, and the original thread of each screw is given, as well as the nearest BA equivalent in each case.

The book covers not only a single model, but only two of the many versions of that model, namely the flat-key Model A and the Model B Gems. Many details on the early Model A are different, as they are on Models C, D, E, F and G. However, this emphasises the quality of the detail in the book, but should not discourage any potential purchaser who happens not to own a flat-key or Model B Gem in need of restoration, since much of the information is relevant to other Gems, and other Edison models in general. What such a purchaser would have little use for would be the excellent engineer's drawings of most components likely to be needed; in fact, apart from the castings, these include just about every part of the machine, and would enable an enthusiastic restorer with a fully equipped workshop to build a complete Gem phonograph from no more than the castings and the wooden case as a starting point.

According to the front cover, this is No. 1 in 'The Hillandale series of restoration manuals for phonographs and gramophones', and while, despite still being editor of Hillandale, I have no knowledge of what may be in the pipe-line for No. 2, this is certainly an auspicious start which I can thoroughly recommend to every machine collector.

C.P.

Queensland, Australia, 24.3.87

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

I was very interested to read Mr. George Taylor's letter concerning opera shorts in the February Hillandale. In response to his queries, the dating of the Tito Schipa concert No. 2 as 1927 in the December issue is a typographical error and should have read 1930. Allan Prior was an Australian tenor, according to the copyright entry on his short. The only information I have on him is that he starred in two decidedly unsuccessful Broadway musicals: *The White Eagle* (1927, adapted by Rudolph Friml from a very popular stage play, *The Squaw Man*) and *Rainbow* (1928: even with a score by Vincent Youmans, this ran for only 30 performances. Hollywood was not deterred and later

filmed it as Song of the West.)

Hope Hampton was a stunningly beautiful silent film actress with operatic aspirations that do not seem to have come to much. Born in 1902, she made her first film, A Modern Salome, in 1920. With her husband's considerable financial backing, Hope Hampton established her own film production company in 1920. However she never became a major film star, and is now sadly almost forgotten.

Your sincerely, Michael Quinn

Alrewns, Staffs. 2.2.87

Dear Christopher,

I wonder if any member might be able to shed a little light on the following mystery.

I have recently acquired a set of the Nikisch/Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The label of record 040787 (Andante pt. 2) was coming away at the bottom edge and so, curiosity getting the better of me, I peeled it away a little and there, underneath was another label. Further investigation showed that the second label was not complete, most of the top having been removed before the second label was added. Those details that remain, however, are very interesting: they show the catalogue number of the record as 0952, and the performers as the London Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Arthur Nikisch)! Although catalogued as 040787, the face number stamped out on the disc is 0952, and Nikisch did indeed conduct records for HMV with the LSO, which were released with numbers in the 09XX series.

My guess is that, with the political situation as it was in 1913/14, when the records were issued the Gramophone Company might have thought it prudent to tell a white lie as it were, and suggest that the performance was by an English rather than a German orchestra. Some subsequent event then forced them to change their minds, and the true identity of the orchestra was given; purely guesswork on my part, does anyone know the truth?

Does anyone know when this set was actually recorded? The editors of the Guinness Book of Recorded Sound give August 1909, while Gerbardt quotes 1913. Who is right?

Yours sincerely, Steve Bullock

*I venture to suggest that the LSO label is simply the result of a 'cock-up' in the printing department? As to the date of the recording, I am sure I have a reference to it somewhere, which of course I now cannot find, but the Guinness volume is not noted for its accuracy.*

*Ed.*

\*\*\*\*\*



There are MANY Talking Machines  
**BUT ONLY ONE**  
 Perfect Diaphragm.

# OMEGA

— (Selected Ivory) —

The Diaphragm is the voice of the Talking Machine.

For any Sound Box or Reproducer  
 under 2-in. in diameter .. 5s.

For any Sound Box or Reproducer  
 upwards of 2-in. in diameter 6s. 6d.  
**FITTED FREE.**

**OMEGA NEEDLES—The All-British Needle.**

Mr C. Hamley, Leyton, writes, "I take this opportunity to state that I have tried almost every needle on the market, and find that, for purity of tone, the Omega certainly gives the finest result."

9d. per box of 200, by post, 10d.; 3s per 1,000.

**THE TRADE SUPPLIED.**

Write for Terms to the Sole Agents:

**CITY RUBBER & MOTOR CO.,**

156, Bishopsgate Street Without, E.C.

We hold Large Stocks of Gramophone, Zenophone,  
 Twin, and Renu Records.

## SOMETHING BETTER

than what has ever BEEN PRODUCED  
 BEFORE. We want you to hear the

## RENA 12" DOUBLE RECORDS

which we consider the most beautiful records ever  
 recorded, better even than records sold at 12/6 to  
 21/- each.

Put all prejudice on one side and send 5/- for a  
 sample set of 5. You can pay the balance in 3  
 monthly payments of 5/- if you wish. If you do  
 not consider every one EQUAL to a 12/6 Record  
 send them back to us and have your money back.

**FREE EXCHANGE** of broken Pathe Records.

Send for Lists and Particulars AT ONCE.

**FULL STOCKS** of Amberol and Grand Opera  
 Edison Records.

**KEYS AND PASKELL'S,**

Finbury Pavement House, London, E.C.

SHOWROOMS—44, Finbury Pavement, E.C.; 146, Seven Sisters'  
 Road, Holloway, N.; 149, Stoke Newington Road, N.

## NO NEEDLES.

# ASPIR

Sapphire Cut

Disc Records

(11" 3/6, and 12" 3/9, <sup>DOUBLE</sup> SIDED.)

*Unsurpassed for Tone & Quality.*

**EXCHANGE.**

WE EXCHANGE NEW DISCS FOR OLD

# EPIPHONE

TALKING MACHINES,

FROM **27/-** UPWARDS.

Complete with Sound Box, fitted with un-  
 wearable Sapphire for playing "Aspir" discs.



... Write for List and Prices to ...

**ASPIR (London),**

15, Victoria Street,

**WESTMINSTER.**

## Obituary

Dr. Alistair Thomson

We hear with regret of the death of Dr. Alistair Thomson, of St. Andrews, in February. He was 74.

In 1977, as Keeper of Science and Technology at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, and on the edge of retirement Alistair Thomson organised the exhibition of phonographs and gramophones to mark the Phonograph's Centenary, as well as a symposium on the talking machine that was attended by many from this Society.

Over the years, due largely to a personal interest in these instruments on his part, the phonographs and gramophones on display were restored to a high standard, and when augmented and laid out in a large room in 1977, undoubtedly represented the pinnacle museum display of such instruments anywhere. They made a breathtaking sight as all who were there will recall, and memories may still be refreshed with the illustrated catalogue and report of the celebrations.

Born in Watford of Scottish parents, Dr. Thomson graduated from Edinburgh University in 1937 and worked for the next ten years as an electrical engineer with the B.B.C. From 1924 to 1954 he lectured in electronics at Heriot Watt, and then moved to Kingston, Jamaica, as Principal of Jamaica Technical College, taking up his Edinburgh post in 1958.

Even in retirement Alistair Thomson continued his interest in recorded sound; for the Society he gave the first illustrated talk to the East Fife branch in 1978, and in the same year he attended the last get-together of Edison artists at West Orange.

Alistair Thomson brought a warmth and infectious enthusiasm to all he took on. He will be greatly missed.

G.L.F.

### "PLAY THIS ONE"

Record dealers of the past used many methods of advertising, from the simple label-defacing sticker through the nice cardboard covers which could be written upon, to the more expensive newspaper or magazine spaces. Recently, in the midst of some 12-inch classical discs I was turning over in a junk shop, lay a 'baby' record, just six inches in diameter, the label of which stated "With the compliments of C & J Henecy". This was a method employed by one of Dublin city's leading record stores, Henecy, 18 Crow St., just off Dome St. Henecy's carried large stocks of gramophones and records of all the leading makes and records of local singers and musicians on their own green label. It would seem that sales of these were not big as copies do not turn up very often. The advertising record, Matrix E691 and the reverse E627 were pressed by the Crystalate Manufacturing Co. Ltd. of Tonbridge, as were the 10-inch records.



So, on to the turntable of my H.M.V. 109 with the worn, duck-egg-blue labelled record. There follows much surface noise ('egg-frying' I call it) and then to the air of 'Phil the Fluter's Ball' with a lively dance-band introduction, a baritone voice begins:

*Now you've heard of Phil the Fluter from the town of Ballymuck  
You've heard of bold Fitzmaurice, on an island he was stuck  
You've heard of Motor Races, and the records they have got -  
But Henecy has got the greatest records of the lot.*

*Call into Crow Street and hear him play a few of them  
G.H.Elliott, McCormack or O'Dea;  
Gramophones galore, you can come and have your view of them,  
Cabinets or portables around for you to see.*

*If you're keen on the flute or the twiddle of the fiddle-o,  
Jazz to get you going like a herring on the griddle-o,  
Overtures, opera, no matter what you call:  
Just come along to Henecy's, he is sure to have them all.*

*Now you've heard of Phil the Fluter, how he passed around the hat  
There's a moral that is obvious in actions such as that  
Pay as much as you can spare, I go to dances that are free  
For Henecy's arrange your easy payments to a 'T'.*

*The Regal, Imperial, the H.M.V. and all of them  
The Big 8 Radio that sells at 1/3d  
Or 10-inch Henecy and all the local stars on them  
A double-sided bargain you'll readily agree.*

*There's the tute of the flute and the twiddle of the fiddle-o,  
Jazz to get you dancing on the Big 8 Radio  
Fox Trot or classical, no matter what you call  
Just come along to Henecy, he's sure to have them all.*

The band concludes with a few bars of music. Perhaps these little discs were given away with purchases of records or a machine, or sold for a few pence. Of those mentioned, Fitzmaurice the Airman had a polka named after him and recorded by John J.Kimmel in 1928 on Victor 21441 and on Edison 52488. Motor racing was a popular sport in the Phoenix Park in those days (and still is). Jimmy O'Dea had dozens of records to his credit on a variety of labels including Parlophone, Dominion, H.M.V., Decca and Regal Zonophone. The reverse E 627 was a lively 'Old Irish Melodies' by the 'Guards Band'.

Michael Hegarty

#### PHONOGRAPH - MUSIC BOX - AUTOMATED INSTRUMENT SHOW

The organisers of the above show publish a newsletter with articles descriptive of the show, a Cranford, New Jersey, U.S.A., and would be happy to send a free copy to anyone on request. Details from John Booth.

